

[27th February 1928]

ABOLITION OF LOCAL FUND TOLL-GATES

* Mr. M. A. MANIKKAVELU NAYAKAR :—“ Mr. President, Sir, I move that—

‘ This Council recommends to the Government that all local fund toll-gates in the Presidency be abolished from the next official year ’.

“ Sir, it is one of those resolutions which the Treasury Benchers will not welcome because it cuts at the source of their revenue; and especially the hon. the Finance Member will not like it. I think it is a barbarous system which does not exist in any civilized country and it does not prevail in any part of northern India. Apart from the system being a barbarous one, I may point out that it hits hard on poor ryots who market their produce from their villages to the neighbouring fairs and towns. It is also a great nuisance of the travelling public to be stopped during their journey. I am not unaware of the difficulty to the Government since it takes away a large portion of their revenue. But I may point out that they may try to raise revenue in some other manner, for instance, as the Secretary of the Local Self-Government Department suggested in his evidence to the Roads Development Committee, a tax on petrol may be levied. I think that will be a much more preferable way of raising revenue than by means of a toll-gate. I may also suggest that the proposed entertainment tax in municipalities may be set apart for maintaining the good condition of the roads. As the ryot is already overburdened, it will be a good thing to relieve him of some of these burdens. I therefore request my hon. Friends on the opposite side to unanimously support this resolution and help in finding some other means of levying tax. I only suggested one method, but it is the duty of the hon. Members on the Treasury benches to find out other preferable means of raising revenue. I therefore commend this resolution to the unanimous decision of the House.”

* Mr. GOPALA MENON :—“ Sir, I beg to second this motion. Those who have passed these toll-gates know the delay and the inconvenience caused to them by the detention of their cars at these toll-gates and the consequent delay. Very often it costs the user of the motor-car 2 to 4 annas by way of petrol wastage. It is the subject of a number of complaints that have come up before the South Indian Motor Union, of which I am a member of the Committee. It is not motor-car users alone that are put to this inconvenience. Even poor peasants who have to take their produce are subject to this hardship. Witnesses before the Roads Development Committee which recently met at Delhi have expressed the opinion that these toll-gates should go without any delay; and my recollection is that the hon. Mr. Cotterell also endorsed that view while he gave evidence before that Committee. On these grounds I second the motion recommending to the Government that these toll-gates should be abolished from the next official year.”

* The hon. Dr. P. SUBBARAYAN :—“ Mr. President, as far back as October 1925 the hon. Member who was then in charge of this portfolio had considered this question and wanted to find out a way by which toll-gates could be abolished. As a matter of fact, certain proposals were before the Government. One of them was to increase the land cess by 2 pies in the rupee and another was the imposition of a tax of Rs. 100 on owners of motor vehicles. But the Raja Sahib found, and I agree with him in the matter, that it was impossible to raise such revenue. I will give you a few figures. The amount of expenditure incurred on roads in the year 1924-25 was 86·72 lakhs.

27th February 1928]

[Dr. P. Subbarayan]

"But income from tolls was 30 lakhs. The amount from tolls in 1925-26 was 30.26 lakhs and expenditure 96 lakhs. In 1926-27 the amount spent on road development was 101.56 lakhs and the toll income was 34.51 lakhs. So hon. Members will realize that unless a proper substitute could be found to replace this large amount of revenue, it will be impossible to get rid of tolls altogether however inconvenient the travelling public may feel about the delay. I know not only the users of motor cars but also the bandy drivers find it very inconvenient to pass through toll-gates. But as long as a great amount of money is spent for communications, we have got to rely on a source of income by which we can maintain the roads. Under the circumstances I am sure hon. Members will realize the difficulty in carrying out the resolution even if it is passed by the Council. I would ask hon. Members to consider the practical point of view before they pass the resolution.

11-45
a.m.

"The second point that I want to make out is that my friend is in a great hurry to carry out this resolution. The Road Development Committee has been appointed by Government of India and they are considering the alternative sources of revenue which will make the roads what they ought to be. When their proposals are before us we may well be able to see whether we can get rid of these toll-gates. The President of the District Board of Madura had some proposals about this but even he has not gone to the extent of submitting his proposals to the Government. Under the circumstances I am sure my hon. Friends will see the administrative difficulties that stand in the way of carrying out this resolution."

* Mr. M. A. MANIKKAVELU NAYAKAR :—"In view of the explanation (laughter), in view of the remarks made by the Chief Minister I wish to withdraw the resolution."

The resolution was by leave withdrawn.

SALE OF 'POORUM'

* Dr. (Mrs.) S. Muthulakshmi Reddi rose to move her resolution.

* The hon. the PRESIDENT :—"The hon. Member may move her resolution in the amended form she suggested, viz., in line 3 for the word 'vendors' substitute the word 'chemist.'"

* Dr. (Mrs.) S. MUTHULAKSHMI REDDI :—"I withdraw the amendment."

* The hon. the PRESIDENT :—"Then the hon. Member may move in the original form."

* Dr. (Mrs.) S. MUTHULAKSHMI REDDI :—"Mr. President, Sir, I beg to move the resolution that stands in my name :

'This Council recommends to the Government that the sale of the bazaar drug known as "Poorum" in Tamil or "Rasakarpur" in Hindi by other than licensed vendors be prohibited forthwith.'

"I move this resolution in response to the repeated appeals made by responsible medical officers of the Telugu districts and especially parts of the East Godavari. Poorum is an impure form of calomel and it is manufactured by people who have no knowledge of chemistry or pharmacology. Without any test of the impurities, the drug is left with the ordinary provision